

I/WE CLAIM:

1. A compact package for a garment made from a delicate material comprising:
 - a container body defining a storage chamber having an open end;
 - a garment made from a delicate material having an associated uncompressed, loose density, said garment being compressed within the storage chamber of said container body to multiple times the loose, uncompressed density;
 - a buffer material, separate from the garment, arranged upon the garment within the storage chamber; and
 - a cover member extending across the open end of the storage chamber to retain the garment and buffer material within the container body.
2. The compact package according to claim 1, wherein the cover member includes a body portion provided with a plurality of openings.
3. The compact package according to claim 2, wherein the body portion of the cover member includes an arcuate base.
4. The compact package according to claim 3, wherein a lower side of the base is convex in shape.
5. The compact package according to claim 1, further comprising: a pull-tab element, attached to the body portion of the cover member, for use in removing the cover member from the storage chamber.

6. The compact package according to claim 5, wherein the pull-tab element is pivotally connected to the body portion.
7. The compact package according to claim 6, wherein the pull-tab element constitutes a ring.
8. The compact package according to claim 1, further comprising: a plurality of projections provided on an upper inside surface portion of the container body, said cover member engaging the plurality of projections within the storage chamber.
9. The compact package according to claim 1, further comprising: a cap member mounted over the open end of the container body.
10. The compact package according to claim 9, wherein the container body is formed, about at least a portion of the open end, with an outwardly projecting lip, and said cap member is formed with a plurality of inner projections, wherein said cap member is snap-fit to the container body with the plurality of inner projections extending about the lip.
11. The compact package according to claim 1, wherein the storage chamber has a total volume of less than 10 in^3 (164 cm^3).
12. The compact package according to claim 1, wherein the buffer material is different from the delicate material of the garment.
13. The compact package according to claim 12, wherein the buffer material is constituted by paper.

14. The compact package according to claim 1, wherein the garment constitutes hosiery.

15. The compact package according to claim 14, wherein the hosiery constitutes a pair of pantyhose.

16. A compact package for a garment made from a delicate material comprising:

a container body defining a storage chamber having an open end, said storage chamber having a total volume of less than 10 in³ (164 cm³);

a garment made from a delicate material having an associated uncompressed, loose density, said garment being compressed within the storage chamber of said container body to multiple times the loose, uncompressed density;

a cover member extending across the open end of the storage chamber to retain the garment within the container body; and

a cap member mounted to the open end of the container body over the cover member.

17. The compact package according to claim 16, wherein the container body is formed, about at least a portion of the open end, with an outwardly projecting lip, and said cap member is formed with a plurality of inner projections, wherein said cap member is snap-fit to the container body with the plurality of inner projections extending about the lip.

18. The compact package according to claim 16, wherein the cover member includes a body portion provided with a plurality of openings.

19. The compact package according to claim 18, wherein the body portion of the cover member includes an arcuate base.
20. The compact package according to claim 19, wherein a lower side of the base is convex in shape.
21. The compact package according to claim 16, further comprising: a pull-tab element, attached to the body portion of the cover member, for use in removing the cover member from the storage chamber.
22. The compact package according to claim 21, wherein the pull-tab element is pivotally connected to the body portion.
23. The compact package according to claim 22, wherein the pull-tab element constitutes a ring.
24. The compact package according to claim 16, further comprising: a plurality of projections provided on an upper inside surface portion of the container body, said cover member engaging the plurality of projections within the storage chamber.
25. The compact package according to claim 16, further comprising: a buffer material arranged upon the garment within the storage chamber.
26. The compact package according to claim 25, wherein the buffer material is different from the delicate material of the garment.

27. The compact package according to claim 26, wherein the buffer material is constituted by paper.

28. The compact package according to claim 16, wherein the garment constitutes hosiery.

29. The compact package according to claim 28, wherein the hosiery constitutes a pair of pantyhose.

30. A method of packaging a garment made from a delicate material comprising:

loading a garment, made from a delicate material, within a container body having a total volume of less than 10 in³ (164 cm³), with the garment being compressed to multiple times a loose, uncompressed density of the garment;

covering the garment with a cover member to retain the garment within the container body; and

engaging a cap member at an open end of the container body across the cover member.

31. The method according to claim 30, further comprising: pre-loading the garment into a tube and subsequently shifting the garment from the tube into the container body.

32. The method according to claim 31, further comprising: pre-loading a buffer material into the tube with the garment.

33. The method according to claim 31, wherein the pre-loading includes initially drawing the garment into a first part of the tube and subsequently blowing the garment into a second part of the tube.

34. The method according to claim 31, wherein the garment is shifted into the container body by a plunger extending into the tube.

35. The method according to claim 34, further comprising: inserting the cover member into the container body with the plunger.

36. The method according to claim 30, further comprising: providing a pull-tab on the cover member for removing the cover member in order to access the garment in the container body.

37. The method according to claim 30, further comprising: loading a buffer material, which constitutes a separate piece from the garment, within the container body with the garment.

38. The method according to claim 30, wherein the cap member is snap-fit onto the open end of the container body.

39. An apparatus for packaging a garment made from a delicate material comprising:

means for supporting a container body including an open end leading to an interior storage chamber having a volume less than 10 in³ (164 cm³); and

means for directing each of a garment made from a delicate material, a separate buffer material, and a cover member successively into the storage chamber.

40. The apparatus according to claim 39, wherein said directing means comprises a pre-loading tube for initially housing the garment and the buffer material.

41. The apparatus according to claim 40, wherein said directing means further comprises a plunger member for shifting the garment and buffer material into the storage chamber.

42. The apparatus according to claim 41, wherein said plunger includes a terminal end portion which supports the cover member.

43. The apparatus according to claim 41, wherein the pre-loading tube is shiftable into and out of alignment with the plunger member.